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**Our View:**

**Filmmaker Moore should be spared from Oscar split**

*The Opinions Council of the Daily Vidette in Normal, Illinois*

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On the heels of mixed reactions to his Oscar acceptance speech, filmmaker Michael Moore faces new criticism in the form of a petition to have his Academy Award revoked.

The petition—the first to try and have an Oscar taken away from a recipient—urges the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences to “investigate and, if necessary, recall the award for Best Documentary Feature for Bowling for Columbine from writer-director Michael Moore and producer Michael Donovan.”

The petition began on the basis of allegations that Moore’s Bowling for Columbine includes staged scenes and facts taken out of context. “[Moore] won the Oscar for best documentary,” one Moore critic, David T. Hardy, wrote in a much-read online essay about Bowling for Columbine. “Unfortunately, [Bowling for Columbine] is not a documentary by the Academy’s own definition ... One need only consult Rule 12 of rules for the Academy Award: a documentary is a *non-fictional* movie.”

What Hardy neglects to mention is that the Academy’s Rule 12 defines a documentary as a movie that deals “creatively with cultural, artistic, historical, social, scientific, economic or other subjects. It may be photographed in actual occurrence, or may employ partial reenactment,” as long as “the emphasis is on fact and not fiction.”

The Academy’s definition of a documentary (and *not* Hardy’s definition of the Academy’s definition of a documentary) actually fits Bowling for Columbine nicely. Within the film, Moore “creatively” toys with factual details. But the questions his movie raises, specifically about America’s culture of violence, are valid. Moore should not be punished for asking them.

The petition further asks the Academy to prosecute Moore “for perpetrating fraud on the Academy and the thousands of members it represents.” Prosecution seems harsh. No one featured in Bowling for Columbine who felt misrepresented has filed a lawsuit against Moore for libel or slander. Should such libel or slander lawsuits be filed, those cases would not concern the Academy anyway. The Oscar was given to Moore for his *artistic* merit, not journalistic integrity.

Unfortunately, the term “documentary” does not automatically mean “truth.” Moore might not be ethically sound in the organization and presentation of his material, but that does not constitute any reason to take his Oscar away.